DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 214 273 EA 014 525

AUTHOR Malinka, Robert M., Ed.
TITLE Middle School Research. Selected Studies 1977-1979. Volume II.
INSTITUTION National Middle School Association, Fairborn, Ohio.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 68p.; For individual papers, see EA 014 526-534.
AVAILABLE FROM National Middle School Association, P.O. Box 968, Fairborn, OH 45324 ($5.00; quantity discounts).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Educational Practices; Educational Principles; *Educational Research; Guidance Programs; Institutional Characteristics; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Language Arts; *Middle Schools; Principals; Program Implementation; Research Needs; Student Attitudes; Student School Relationship; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The nine studies contained in this volume represent efforts to better understand and develop improved programs for middle school students. Research briefs deal with such topics as the attitudes of students, teachers, and principals; middle school characteristics; the degree of middle school program implementation; a guidance program model; research needs; small group instruction; and language arts programs. A bibliography accompanies each study. (MLF)

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MIDDLE SCHOOL RESEARCH

SELECTED STUDIES 1977 - 1979

VOLUME II

EA 011 525 —
EA 011 531

$5.00 Per Copy

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INTRODUCTION

The preparation and completion of Middle School Research, Selected Studies 1977-79, Volume II, represents another means by which the National Middle School Association continues to provide leadership in the full development of the middle school concept. The nine studies contained in this volume represent efforts to better understand and/or develop improved programs for middle school students.

Tha Association believes the publication of these efforts by middle school professionals will provide additional data to aid in the continual rethinking and planning which is vital in keeping the middle school a viable concept.

Hal D. Gaddis
Executive Director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Middle School Association expresses sincere gratitude for having received permission to reproduce these research briefs. Originally, the briefs were published by the Center for Research Service and Publication, at the University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. The Publication Director was Dr. Alfred A. Arth, and the Director of the Center for Research Service and Publication was Dr. Myron R. Basom. Acknowledgment is provided the original publishers for their permission to print this material, as well as for their continuing support of the middle school concept.

Robert M. Malinka
Editor

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A STUDY OF OPENNESS TO NEW EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS AS COMPARED TO ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS

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Introduction

As middle school development continues, teachers are often asked to adopt unfamiliar techniques while being given little or no pre- or in-service training designed specifically to help reduce any resultant anxiety. This critical oversight may well be the most crucial factor in any middle school failure to actualize significant reform. The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of openness to new experiences and degree of dogmatism of middle grades teachers. The study sought empirical support for the contention that in-service teachers need risk-supporting experiences to enhance their security and openness capabilities in a transition.

Two openness measures, The Experience Inquiry, developed and validated by E. T. Fitzgerald (1966) and the short form of the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale, modified by V. C. Troldahl and F. A. Powell (1965) were used. Resultant data helped to answer the following questions:

1. Are middle school teachers more open to new experiences and less dogmatic than elementary or secondary teachers?

2. Do teachers from a traditional setting exhibit a higher degree of openness and less dogmatism than teachers from a more flexible setting?

On the basis of the data generated by these measurement tools, certain assumptions and implications were drawn for these questions:

1. What may be the underlying factors causing middle school teachers to score higher, lower, or on a par with colleagues.?

2. What experiences can help teachers foster a sense of security and openness for change?

3. What is the responsibility of an openness measure being used in screening and hiring practices?

4. What is the possibility of risk-supporting activities being used in in-service programs?

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Review of Relevant Literature

Innovation in intermediate education has been targeted for reform during the past two decades. Suggestions have included reorganizing traditional grade patterns, restructuring curricula, programs, and services, relocating faculty, and developing a humane, open, and experiential-exploratory learning climate. Many school systems have adopted the middle school approach in a

wholesale restructuring and remodeling program.

One serious oversight, however, has caused many programs to struggle and falter or to return to traditional intermediate models of the "scaled-down" subject-centered junior high school. Middle school reforms have failed to consider some principles or organizational theory. Without input and involvement there is little commitment. Without preparation and planning there is insecurity and reluctance. Without security and commitment there is little chance for success.

Suggestions for reform began not with the schools, but with theoreticians and in-service teachers who were hardly prepared for the bandwagon reform movement which followed. In addition, teacher education institutions were not prepared to train middle school teachers. The result was many teachers unprepared and ill-qualified for major change adjustment.

"The changes in instructional demands inherent within the intermediate level purposes will require different capabilities of teachers" (Curtis and Bidwell, 1970). According to Joseph C. Bondi, Jr., (1974), these capabilities include "teacher skills, understandings and competencies in terms of the nature of the emerging adolescent as a learner and as a total personality."

If one primary function of intermediate education is to "consciously aim toward the continuing development of self-directing individuals, capable of solving problems through both rational and creative endeavors" (Tobin, 1973), then that identical aim should be applied to intermediate teachers. They should be supported in their attempts to solve problems resulting from rapid change. The development of teachers whose outlooks are flexible and open is crucial to success and underscores the need to help individual teachers enhance special training attitudes and qualities.

Teachers must know the kinds of life-learning needs of the transescent and have the ability to execute these experiences in creative ways. These teachers should understand the need for diversity and flexibility, should be able to create cooperative human relationships, should be willing to experiment, and should be open to new ideas. Teachers must have the capacity for adapting to the rapidly changing needs of our schools and communities and must find ways of anticipating and facilitating orderly changes for the years ahead (Danemark, 1970). Teacher may no longer see themselves as the centers of classroom attention, but must perceive their role as helping youngsters realize their intellectual potentials by creating a free, open, stimulating environment.

However, "resistance to change, unawareness of current trends, and an unwillingness to accept the validity of research evidence are conditions that too often characterize many public school practices" (Clegg and Ochoa, 1970).

Studies of Openness and Dogmatism

The issues of resistance to change and degree of dogmatism have been of interest to many researchers in recent years. Studies have been conducted to determine if openness, defined alternately as flexibility, tolerance, empathy, and creativity, has significant influence on a person's behavior

sufficient to influence the ability to cope with change, understand its ramifications, and adjust to resultant insecurities. Several studies support this and provide empirical data.

Following is a discussion of several research studies on openness which, while conducted on behalf of intermediate reform, are applicable to middle school teachers. For example, H. A. Engle (1961) in his "Study of Openness as a Factor in Change" suggested the following:

1. The development of openness in students is possible only when we develop openness in teachers.

2. Teachers who are more open are apparently superior in their ability to make positive change.

3. Teachers who are more open are more positive and accepting of themselves and usually more understanding of others.

In "A Study of the Relationships Between Personality Characteristics of Classroom Teachers and Pupil Perceptions of These Teachers," F. C. Emmerling (1961) reported that teachers who were determined as being more open were seen by their students as being relatively more understanding, more positive, more congruent, and more pupil-centered. R. Zahn (1965), in "The Use of Interaction Analysis in Supervising Student Teachers," writes that the relatively more open student teachers were judged by their cooperating teachers to be significantly more proficient in their student teaching performance than those student teachers considered to be less open.

In an attempt to assess the teacher's open-mindedness, broadly categorized as conservative vs. liberal, as it relates to how learning best occurs, Alton Harrison, Jr., and Eldon G. Scriven (1970) determined the following:

> The conservative view holds that learning best occurs when the child is a passive receiver of the knowledge to be learned. The liberal view holds that the child is a dynamic learner and is actively involved in the learning experiences. It would seem that a teacher who views learning conservatively would desire a more structured classroom atmosphere. Whereas, a teacher with a liberal view of how learning occurs would prefer a more democratic classroom atmosphere.

The need for open and flexible teachers reappears throughout the literature on middle school. Studies of the effect of openness on the ability to change suggest that open people can adjust to and accept change with greater ease. Thus, teacher being asked to implement change in middle schools must be supported in their risk-taking and encouraged to be open, flexible, and secure.

Statement of Hypothesis

This study was designed to add empirical data to the contention that underlying all reform is the necessity for openness to experience and security with risk-taking situations and that middle school teachers are not significantly better prepared to implement reform than their colleagues.

Description of Sampling Techniques

The participants for this study were selected from two diverse geographical and socio-economic areas. The "Area I" school system, a small West Virginia urban center located adjacent to coal mining regions, is based on a grade pattern of 6-3-3 with traditional facilities, course offerings, and a long established junior high model. "Area II" is located in a rural farming region of central Maryland. Until recently insulated from urban sprawl, the area is now experiencing rapid growth and reflects a more urbanized climate. The schools of "Area II" are organized 5-3-4 with modern open-space facilities, and somewhat diverse flexible programs.

The faculties and student bodies of both school areas are predominantly white, middle class, Protestants. The faculties are primarily female, teacher college or state university educated, with an average of ten years experience.

Description of Data Gathering and Analysis Procedures

With the recent development of tools such as Fitzgerald's The Experience Inquiry, and Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale, developed and co-validated with additional instruments such as adjective check lists and personality inventory scales, an attempt can be made to measure the degree of commitment, tolerance, and openness as reflected in personal reactions to statements and scenarios.

This study began with the selection of two openness measurements. The Experience Inquiry, is a 56-item, true-false test, designed to measure reactions for or against questions relating to openness. According to Fitzgerald (1966), the instrument is reliable, internally consistent, and scale sensitive over a wide range. The item-total score correlations are all in a positive direction and most of them are significant. He adds that there is some initial confidence that openness to experience can be subjected to empirical study.

The short form of the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale (Troldahl and Powell, 1965) was modified from the original 40-item test designed by Milton Rokeach (1960) as a means of measuring the structure of the belief system of an individual in relation to the extent to which a person is open- or close-minded. According to Rokeach, the basic characteristic that defines a person's belief system as open or closed is the extent to which the person can receive, evaluate, and act on relevant information received from the outside on its own intrinsic merits, unencumbered by irrelevant factors in the situation arising from within the person or from the outside.

The short form of the test consists of 20 statements selected from the original 40. The testee numerically registers the degree of agreement or disagreement within a range of positive 3 to negative 3 on each item. The total score is obtained by summing the scores of the 20 items.

The tests were administered in five schools to 166 teachers. Papers were then collected and sorted into groups according to city and grade level designations on each answer sheet. Elementary teachers became Group "A," intermediate teachers became Group "B," and secondary teachers became Group "C."

Papers were then scored according to answers provided by Fitzgerald and directions provided by Rokeach.

Papers exhibiting a 5% ambiguity in score due to editorial comment or lack of answers were removed. This resulted in the loss of 14 Fitzgerald tests and 5 Rokeach tests.

Using the total scores on The Experience Inquiry from each group (A: n = 31; B: n = 60; C: n = 61) analysis of variance and "f" tests were run to determine if there was significance between groups. No significance was found at the .05 level which caused the researcher to reject the hypothesis that intermediate level teachers are more open to experience than their colleagues. The same was applied to the Rokeach scores (A: n = 35; B: n = 64; C: n = 62) with the same results.

Scores were then extracted for each group (A, B, and C) on each of the seven sub-sections of The Experience Inqiury, and anlysis of variance and "f" tests run on each section. Again, no significant differences resulted.

The final test was for significance at the .05 level between the two localities for each group (A, B, and C) on The Experience Inquiry. Analysis of variance and "f" tests revealed significance at the .01 level for the intermediate teachers (Group B: n = 60) and the secondary teachers (Group C: n = 61) with teachers from the more flexible, less traditional schools scoring higher and thus affecting the significance.

Tests were then run between the two localities for each group (A, B, and C) on the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale for significance at the .05 level. The intermediate teachers (B: n = 64) were the only group to evidence significance at the .05 level, with no group doing so at the .01 level. Again, it was the more flexible, less traditional locality showing the less dogmatic scale

Thus, the initial hypothesis that intermediate level teachers are more open to experience than their colleagues was rejected.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

There was no significant difference in the degree of openness and dogmatism of teachers at any grade level. Additionally, there was no significant difference between teachers of any group (A, B, and C) on any sub-section of The Experience Inquiry. However, significance did occur between the two localities in each group (A, B, and C) on The Experience Inquiry. At all three levels, the teachers from the more flexible schools scored significantly higher on the test.

Conclusions drawn from this study call up some unanswered questions, including the following:

1. Does the significance arise from a difference in location, urban vs. rural?

2. Does it arise from a difference in years of experience?

3. Does it arise, as in the case of this study, from a traditional vs. flexible school setting and administration?

Based on the literature, research findings, and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. In-service teachers should be provided with experiences to help them identify their own needs as well as those of students. They should be encouraged to participate in all decision-making situations which affect their school students, and teaching conditions.

2. Teachers should be encouraged to form creative, cooperative teaching arrangements; should be encouraged to suggest, develop, and implement changes which facilitate development of any creative effort, and should be supported in those efforts.

3. Teachers should have experiences which illustrate various forms of teacher control and ways to reduce control of students to facilitate independence and interdependence.

4. Teachers should be encouraged to develop new methods of evaluation and to increase their skills both in various disciplines, and in general psychology. Teachers who question and challenge should be supported; diversity among both teachers and students should be recognized and rewarded.

As a result of this exploratory study, the researcher concludes that middle school teachers are no more open to experience than their colleagues. Therefore, any school system contemplating reform should consider using some openness measures to help teachers appraise their own openness to new experiences and to help schools provide in-service experiences which will enhance security and psychological support during stressful periods accompanying the change process. Additionally, openness measures may be used to help administrators screen and hire candidates for teaching positions in schools involved in reform and innovation.

Also, as a result of the significant differences between the two localities used for this study, further studies should be undertaken to determine what factors may cause some in-service teachers to exhibit a higher degree of openness than others.

Relative to these suggestions, if openness is a highly desirable characteristic for intermediate level teachers, experiences must be developed and implemented to discover, measure, and enhance this attitude.

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ED214275

A COMPARISON OF MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL AND TEACHERS

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Introduction

In this study, student attitudes toward school and toward their teachers will be compared. Attention will be focused on the attitudes of students in the middle grades (7 and 8) and those of students in the high school grades (9 through 12). It is hypothesized that the attitudes of students in the middle grades will be different than the attitudes of students in the high school grades.

Research validating the "Teacher Perceiver," an instrument used by administrators to identify effective teachers, suggests that an important component of effective teaching is that students have a positive attitude toward that teacher. Since teachers serve as models for their students, positive student attitudes toward teachers should be examined as a desirable component of effective teaching.

Brown (1977) found a positive relationship between achievement and four evaluative components: (1) method used, (2) knowledge displayed by the instructor, (3) personal aspects of the instructor, and (4) content covered. Gilbert and Cooper (1976) also found a positive correlation between student attitude and achievement in mathematics. Thus a positive attitude may be a contributing factor in student academic achievement.

All teachers in this study (grades 7 through 12) received training in secondary education. If this training had been equally effective for preparing all teachers of grades 7 through 12, then we could expect no significant difference between the attitudes of students in the middle and high school grades. However, a difference, especially in the attitudes of students in the middle grades are more negative than those in the high school grades, would indicate that a special preparation is needed for teachers working in the middle grades - a preparation different from the traditional secondary school preparation. If teachers receiving identical training are perceived differently by their students in these two grade ranges, then that training must somehow be changed to address those differences.

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Procedure

Fifty graduates of the University of Cincinnati teacher education programs were selected at random from U. of C. graduates employed as teachers in the metropolitan Cincinnati area. These teachers were part of a follow-up study for the State of Ohio on recent teacher education graduates. All of the teachers selected had at least one year's teaching experience at their particular grade level when the information for the study was collected. The grade range represented by these teachers was from grade 7 through grade 12. As a result of incomplete follow-up data, sixteen teachers were dropped from the analysis, leaving a total of 34 teachers whose students participated in the study.

A "Student Evaluation of Teaching" instrument developed at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas, at Austin, was administered to the students of the 34 teachers involved in the study during the Spring of 1977. Set I of this instrument was used for analysis. Set I, developed by Veldman and Peck, is a ten-item Likert-scaled instrument which measures attitudes of students towards their teachers.

For each teacher, a class mean on each item was computed. Each class consisted of approximately 30 students. For final analysis, student results of 13 teachers of high school grades (9-12) and 21 teachers of middle grades (7-8) were used.

The planned data analysis included a factor analysis followed by a multivariate analysis of variance procedure to test the hypothesis that students at different levels (middle grades or high school) differed significantly on attitudes toward school and toward teachers as measured by the factors isolated in the factor analysis. If overall significance was found, univariate analyses of variance would be performed to test significant differences between groups on each factor individually. The Multivariate Analysis of Variance package and the Statistical package for the Social Sciences on the computer facilities at the Southwest Ohio Regional Computer Center were employed to analyze the data.

Results

The findings of the factor analysis are shown in Table #1. The results for the first three factors are shown, since they accounted for over 70 percent of the variance. The eigenvalues for all other factors were less than 1. In order for an item to be included within a given factor, it had to load at least .50 on that factor while not loading more than .20 on any other.

Table #1

Factor Analysis of Set I

Factor	# of Items	Eigenvalue	Pct. of Var.	Cum. Pct.
1	6	4.066	40.7	40.7
2	2	1.532	15.3	56.0
3	2	1.426	14.3	70.3

The three factors were labeled as follows:

Factor 1: The teacher makes school work interesting and fun.

Factor 2: The teacher is knowledgeable in the subject area.

Factor 3: The teacher expects a lot from students.

The following items loaded on Factor 1, the "fun" factor:

1. This teacher is always friendly toward students.

3. This teacher is never dull and boring.
5. This teacher asks for students' opinions before making decisions.
6. This teacher is usually cheerful and optimistic.
8. This teacher makes learning more like fun than work.
10. This teacher often gives students a choice of assignments.

These items loaded on Factor 2, the "knowledge" factor:

2. This teacher knows a lot about the subject.
7. This teacher is not confused by unexpected questions.

The following items loaded on Factor 3, the "high expectation" factor:

4. This teacher expects a lot from students.
9. This teacher doesn't let students get away with anything.

Table #2 reports the cell means and standard deviations for the middle and high school students on each of the three factors.

Table #2

Cell Means and Standard Deviations
for Each Factor

Observed Deviations		Cell Means		Standard Deviations
Grade		Factor 1 "fun"	Factor 2 "knowledge"	Factor 3 "high expectations"
High School	Mean	12.90	10.18	5.92
	S.D.	2.59	0.59	0.75
Middle School	Mean	13.65	10.55	5.64
	S.D.	1.94	0.61	0.62

Since the instrument was coded using 1 for "almost always true," 2 for "often true ," 3 for "often false," and 4 for "almost always false," low mean scores on a factor indicates that students rate the teacher as "almost always" or "very often" possessing or exhibiting the traits measured by the factor.

The multivariate test for differences among the means identified no significant differences at the .05 level between students in the middle grades and high school on the three factor multivariate analysis of variance. The statistical data are reported in Table #3.

Table #3

Multivariate Analysis of Variance
for Three Factors by Grade Range

Source	F	Sig.
Grade Range	1.5837	0.21

The non-significant multivariate results precluded the one-way analysis of variance tests.

Discussion

The data did not demonstrate significant differences between the attitudes of students in the middle and high school grades on the three factors isolated in the factor analysis. These three factors were:

Factor 1: The teacher makes school work interesting and fun.

Factor 2: The teacher is knowledgeable in the subject area.

Factor 3: The teacher expects a lot from students.

Based on this study, it would seem that our secondary teacher education programs are doing an equivalent job preparing teachers of middle and high school grades.

Due to the small sample size involved, all conclusions must be tenuous. The observation of no significant differences between groups on any of the factors measured does not eliminate differences in other areas. The current study failed to identify differences in attitudes of students in middle and high school grades toward school or toward their teachers.

This study should be regarded as exploratory in nature, and further research including replication studies in this area is indicated.

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ED214276

PRINCIPALS' ATTITUDES ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Introduction

The National Middle School Study was originated and conducted during the 1977-78 academic year, through the College of Education, under the sponsorship of the University of South Carolina. The purpose of the study was to provide baseline data to guide development of a middle school teacher training program.

The research study consisted of two components: (1) surveys to obtain several types of information about middle schools from national leaders and coordinators in State Departments of Education, principals of exemplary middle schools, and teachers of exemplary middle schools, and (2) an attitude questionnaire to determine the attitudes of national leaders, coordinators, principals and teachers, indicated above, toward various functions and characteristics of the middle school. The principals' responses to the attitude questionnaire will form the focus for this paper.

Research Design and Procedures

Sample

This paper describes the responses of 153 (63.7%) of the 240 middle school principals who returned the attitude questionnaire. The sample of 240 exemplary middle schools was identified from information furnished by national leaders, State Department Coordinators, middle school principals, professional organizations, and educational literature. Thirty-seven states were represented by the 153 respondents.

Instruments

A questionnaire of 57 Likert items was designed from various educational resources including educational literature, doctoral dissertations, previous middle school studies, and ERIC searches. The instrument was designed to determine the attitude of middle school principals toward the functions and characteristics of the middle school with respect to five areas, or groups of people: students (10 items), teachers (13 items), principals (12 items), curriculum (12 items), and facilities and organization (10 items). (See Appendix #1). The building principals were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D), or strongly disagreed (SD), with the attitudinal statements. The responses were coded as follows: SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, and SD = 1. Thus a high score indicates a positive endorsement of a statement. The principals were instructed to reflect the actual middle school operations and practices rather than the ideal practices in their responses.

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A pilot questionnaire was field tested by professional educators representing middle school principals and teachers, graduate students enrolled in the University's middle school course, College of Education faculty, and a State Department of Education Middle School Coordinator. The professional educators reactions formed the basis from which the instrument was revised. The revised questionnaire was mailed to the 240 principals of exemplary middle schools in November, 1977. A follow-up mailing was completed in January, 1978.

Method of Analysis

The data analyses were concerned with providing a comprehensive description of the principals' responses. The analyses included an examination of the frequency of responses across the five categories for each item, examination of mean item responses, intercorrelation of items, factor analysis of items both within and across the five major areas and an investigation of the responses aggregated within the five major areas. Regional differences were also examined. The text that follows describes these analyses in detail.

Results

Measurement Properties

Before describing the principals' responses, it is important to provide a brief description of the measurement properties of the questionnaire. First, the internal consistency reliability is calculated using the Cronbach Alpha Index of Reliability. Second, the dimensionality of the five sub-categories was examined by means of principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation.

The internal consistency reliabilities for the five sub-categories were: (1) students (.9313), (2) teachers (.9308), (3) principals (.9290), (4) curriculum (.9573), and (5) facilities and organization (.8625). The factor analysis reveals strong within scale item homogeneity. For the student, principal, and curriculum sub-categories, the factor analysis revealed a single unidiminsional factor. The sub-category dealing with the teacher contained 13 items that loaded on two factors. The major factor contained eleven items and dealt with classroom management. The second factor contained two items and dealt with teacher responsibilities. For the facilities and organization sub-category there were two factors. The major factor contained six items which were concerned with general physical facilities. The second factor contained three items which dealt with organizational procedures.

Sub-Categories

The frequencies and means for each of the 57 Likert items are shown in Appendix #1. For each item the mean (M) response was calculated. Within each of the five sub-categories the items were rank ordered from the item with the highest mean response to the item with the lowest mean response. The top three items will be discussed as the most strongly endorsed statements, the lowest ranking three items will be discussed as the least strongly endorsed.

Student Sub-Category

In the student sub-category, principals indicated strong agreement on the need for basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills (M = 3.451), fostering the development of a healthy self-concept (M = 3.405), and encouraging a satisfactory personal and social adjustment (M = 3.346). The response items to which principals disagreed were maximizing the individual's academic development (M = 3.039), encouraging individual initiative and effort directed toward cognitive achievement (M = 3.157), and stressing skills necessary for survival in society (M = 3.176).

It would appear that specific quantitative statements like those in the preceding sentence were no longer considered defensible student goals by middle school principals. Terms like discipline and citizenship seem to elicit less support than they would have a decade ago.

Teacher Sub-Category

From the results of the teacher sub-category, principals indicated that the first priority should be placed on the teacher's willingness to support guidance and counseling services (M = 3.340). Second, in receiving the principals' support, was the teacher's willingness to assume a variety of teaching roles (M = 3.327). Third was the utilization of team planning and teaching (M = 3.307). Principals were least concerned about teachers' participation in national meetings (M = 2.732), the application of educational research findings to the classroom (M = 2.752), and the establishment of an atmosphere of student freedom and self-directed learning (M = 2.843).

Thus, the principals felt a strong emphasis should be placed on the teachers supporting the guidance and counseling service in the middle school, but at the same time discouraged participation in national conferences and the application of educational research findings to the classroom. The questionnaire did not ask principals whether the classroom teacher should be trained for guidance and counseling services.

Principal Sub-Category

Within the principal sub-category the building principal saw his primary role as the involvement of staff in solving school problems (M = 3.471). His instructional leadership role was considered second in importance (M = 3.412). The third area of concern was that the principal possess previous teaching experience at the middle or junior high school level (M = 3.261). Conversely, principals indicated less need for management/systems approaches (M = 2.536), participation of teachers in school board meetings (M = 2.705), and involvement of teachers in the selection of faculty (M = 2.797), as prerequisites to the administration of a successful middle school.

The findings indicate that principals were primarily concerned with providing instructional leadership through direct teacher involvement. It is interesting to note that with the stress placed on team teaching and planning in middle schools, one would assume that more principals would encourage teachers to participate in staff selecting processes. But this was not the case. The current emphasis of educational leaders on training teachers specifically for working with early adolescents was not considered

important by middle school principals.

Curriculum Sub-Category

In the curriculum sub-category, principals stressed the continued need for the development and refinement of basic skills (M = 3.444), depth, breadth, and sequence in subject matter (M = 3.307), and a balance between subject matter, exploratory areas, and career education (M = 3.288). There was least support for the core curriculum concept (M = 2.582), increased exploration and training in career education (M = 2.948), and the establishment of specific classes for all types of exceptional children (M = 2.987).

Even with the "Back to the Basics" movement, the principals continued to stress the need for balanced curriculum and disagreed on the need for a core curriculum approach. In spite of the increased focus on mainstreaming at the national and state levels, principals did not stress the expansion of classes for exceptional children.

Facilities and Organization Sub-Category

In the facilities and organization sub-category, principals indicated the need for expanding shops, laboratories and special enrichment rooms (M = 3.373), encouraging the development of individualized instruction, independent study, and learning centers (M = 3.183), and providing for team teaching (M = 3.169). On the other hand, principals showed less concern for self-contained classrooms (M = 2.092), departmentalization at grades 5 and 6 (M = 2.431), and discouraged homogeneous or ability grouping (M = 2.732).

In a time of declining enrollments and the "Back to the Basics" movement, it would appear difficult to convince the public of the need for additional building space for shops, laboratories, and learning centers, unless the justification can be linked with improving basic skills. The means of the sub-category indicated a wider spread of disagreement over the necessary facilities required for a middle school. Transition, one of the key functions of a middle school, did not receive enough agreement to be considered in the top three responses.

Regional Variation

The 37 states represented in the sample were divided into 7 regions which included New England, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, Southwest, Rocky Mountains, and Far West. These were used as independent variables in a one way analysis of variance. The dependent variables were the five sub-category totals. There were no significant differences in any of these analyses.

Conclusions

In summary, this study provides a broad description of the principals' perceptions of the characteristics and functions of a middle school. The major substantive conclusions seem to indicate:

1. Middle school principals were emphasizing the learning of specific skills but at the same time stressing the need for maintaining a balanced curriculum.

2. Stress on basic skills and the development of students' self-concept received stronger support than quantitative goal statements dealing with academic achievement, survival skills, discipline, and citizenship.

3. From the principals' perspective a successful middle school teacher should be able to support the guidance and counseling services.

4. The guidance and counseling response did not indicate whether the teacher should be further trained in the guidance and counseling functions.

5. Principals did not support teachers' involvement in staff selection even though the middle school concept emphasizes team planning and teaching.

6. The current emphasis at the national level on training to better anticipate emerging adolescent needs was not seen as being necessary to be a successful middle school teacher.

7. The national and state emphasis on mainstreaming was not reflected in the responses of the middle school principals.

8. Transition, one of the primary characteristics of the middle school, was not placed in the top choices of the principals

The major methodological conclusion of this study is that comprehensive descriptive data appears to be extremely useful in analyzing the current status of the middle school and deciding the direction in which the middle school should move. Our current understanding of middle schools is based more on rhetoric and philosophy than on a clear, empirical description of what students, teachers, and principals actually do in our middle schools.

Appendix #1 contains a sample of the questionnaire used in this study. For each question, the Appendix shows (1) the mean response (M), (2) the number of non-responses (NR), and (3) the number of principals responding in each category.

Appendix #1

National Middle School Study

The study seeks to determine the attitudes of educators toward certain functions and characteristics of middle schools. You will be asked to respond to statements concerning students, teachers, principals, curriculum, and organization. Your responses should reflect your attitudes toward middle schools as they <u>actually</u> operate, not as they <u>ought</u> to operate. Responses to the questionnaire will be completely confidential.

<u>Directions:</u> Check the category Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD) which represents your reac-

tion to the functions and characteristics of the middle school in actual operation.

The Student

For the Student, the Middle School . . .

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
3.294	4	58	90	1	0	Focuses on students learning to learn
3.261	3	42	93	4	C	Helps in the formulation of personal values and moral standards
3.346	4	68	78	3	0	Fosters staisfactory personal and social adjustment
3.405	3	76	69	5	0	Fosters the development of a healthy self-concept
3.288	3	62	79	9	0	Provides the discipline necessary for student learning
3.157	4	42	101	6	0	Encourages individual initiative and effort directed toward cognitive achievement
3.176	3	46	94	10	0	Stresses the skills necessary for survival in society
3.451	3	83	62	5	0	Emphasizes reading, writing, and arithmetic skills as basic to individual development
3.183	4	50	89	10	0	Provides learning experiences directed toward the development of a good citizen
3.039	4	35	97	17	0	Maximizes the individual's academic development

The Teacher

The Middle School Teacher . . .

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
3.248	3	51	95	4	0	Establishes a creative learning environment for early adolescents
3.340	4	70	73	6	0	Supports the guidance and counseling services
3.194	4	54	76	18	1	Implements variable groups -- large/small, multi-age, alternative, etc.
3.307	4	73	62	14	0	Utilizes team planning and team teaching
2.843	3	25	87	36	2	Establishes a climate of student freedom and self-directed learning
3.143	5	51	83	14	0	Provides for, insists upon, and is accountable for student academic achievement
3.327	3	65	79	6	0	Assumes a variety of teaching roles -- facilitator, manager, resource, etc.

The Teacher (Cont'd.)

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
3.261	4	66	69	14	0	Utilizes a variety of instructional techniques -- peer teaching, simulations and games, inquiry, etc.
3.294	3	64	76	10	0	Communicates effectively to parents concerning the child's performance in the school program
2.732	3	17	89	39	5	Participates in state and national meetings and conferences
2.752	6	20	89	36	2	Applies the findings of educational research to classroom teaching
3.209	5	62	72	13	1	Works to design learning activities and strategies to meet the diverse learning styles of the students
3.026	5	40	89	17	2	Establishes a climate of classroom discipline and teacher-directed learning

The Principal

The Middle School Principal . . .

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
2.705	6	34	64	37	12	Participates in school board decision making process
2.536	13	19	74	43	4	Utilizes management principles based on systems design
3.412	5	80	66	2	0	Provides instructional leadership in the middle school program
3.052	5	53	68	24	3	Employs teachers trained in teaching early adolescents
3.261	5	76	53	17	2	Possesses previous teaching experience in middle or junior high schools
3.120	5	65	63	16	4	Develops and controls the budget for his school
3.092	5	48	83	15	2	Provides a system for parent input in a regular basis
3.118	5	70	47	25	6	Employs or has the final decision in the employment of faculty/staff
2.797	7	41	60	39	6	Involves teachers in the selection of faculty/staff
3.227	5	59	79	10	0	Participates in state and national meetings and conferences
3.084	5	43	91	13	1	Applies the findings of educational research to school administration

The Principal (Cont'd.)

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
3.471	5	92	51	5	0	Utilizes staff in solving school problems

The Curriculum

The Middle School Curriculum . . .

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
3.307	5	69	72	7	0	Requires depth, breadth, and sequence in subject matter
3.454	5	86	59	3	0	Continues the development and refinement of basic skills
3.013	6	39	90	17	1	Focuses on competencies as the basis for curriculum design
3.288	6	69	72	5	1	Encourages a proportional balance between subject matter and exploration in elective areas, the fine arts, and career education
3.203	5	56	82	10	0	Provides for varied and continuous progress in subject matter
2.987	7	54	61	27	4	Establishes specific classes for all types of exceptional children
3.163	7	53	86	7	0	Considers both child-centered and subject-centered concerns in a balanced curriculum
3.131	6	53	81	11	2	Encourages participation in activities -- clubs, student government, dramatics, recreation, etc.
3.013	6	39	90	17	1	Focuses on humanistic concerns as the basis for curriculum design
3.000	9	39	94	10	1	Provides for mastery achievement in skills and concepts
2.948	7	35	91	18	2	Provides for exploration and training in career education
2.582	10	18	75	48	2	Focuses on the core curriculum concept as the basis for curriculum design

Facilities and Organization

Middle School Facilities and Organization . . .

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
2.732	6	32	69	37	9	Provides for homogeneous or ability grouping
3.169	5	62	67	17	2	Provides for team teaching
2.856	5	38	68	39	3	Establishes flexible/modular scheduling
2.092	10	13	36	66	28	Maintains the self-contained classroom for grades 5 and/or 6

Facilities and Organization (Cont'd.)

M	NR	SA	A	D	SD	
3.007	5	45	78	21	4	Provides for transition between the self-contained classroom and departmentalization
2.431	11	21	66	35	20	Introduces departmentalization at grades 5 and/or 6
2.856	6	37	72	35	3	Fosters alternative school programs to meet the needs of students
3.183	5	55	82	10	1	Encourages developments in individualized instruction, independent study, learning centers, etc.
2.948	6	48	66	28	5	Requires a building permitting flexible, multi-purpose utilization
3.373	6	78	66	3	0	Broadens the program to include shops, labs, and special enrichment classrooms

ED214277

A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EXISTING PRACTICES OF SELECTED MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON A STANDARDIZED ATTITUDINAL MEASURE

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This study was conducted to (1) determine and compare the relationship between suggested practices observed in ten randomly selected middle schools scoring in the lowest quartile, and ten randomly selected middle schools scoring in the highest quartile on the student attitude section of the 1971 Michigan Assessment Test of Basic Skills, Grade 7, (2) to observe and describe the degree to which suggested practices were implemented in ten randomly selected middle schools scoring in the lowest quartile on the student attitude test, and (3) to observe and describe the degree to which suggested practices were implemented in ten randomly selected middle schools scoring in the highest quartile on the student attitude test.

The earliest studies initiated to determine what practices were followed in middle schools were conducted by Zdanowicz (1965) and Howard (1967).

Compton also examined the current status of middle schools when she samples 1,101 middle schools and a number of basic elements prevalent (1968). Riegle (1971), in a study of Michigan middle schools, determined the degree to which eighteen principles of middle school organization were implemented. In a study of New York middle schools, Baruchin (1971) identified a series of practices which were important to the middle schools.

While Cuff (1967) indicates that there was general conformity of middle school practices, Flynn (1971), in a California study, concluded that specific criteria should be established regarding the middle school. A model could then be developed which would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the middle school program.

Moving to the 5-3-4 plan of organization was found by Rankin (1969) to result in healthier student attitudes. Stephens (1969) found that in a child-centered middle school, the fifth and sixth grade students had a better self-concept of their academic adequacy while the sixth graders had better self-concepts and interpersonal adequacy.

While some research was available on student attitudes, it was minimal. Even more critical to this study, but also minimal, were the studies involving middle school practices. A determination of what practices to study was essential in this research endeavor.

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The practices selected for study were those suggested by two national middle school authorities, William Alexander, and Donald Eichhorn. Alexander and Eichhorn were selected as the outstanding authorities by a jury composed of one administrative practitioner in an exemplary middle school, and five Michigan State University doctoral program graduates whose dissertations centered on the middle school. As a result of the jury's recommendations,

73 practices were featured in the construction of a questionnaire. Where ambiguities of interpretation may have existed, definitions of terms were provided. In addition, seven questions considered significant to the study were included in the questionnaire. These involved school size, social classifications of the school population, and events which may have affected attitude. Added to this were five questions independently directed at teachers, students, and the building administrator to determine to what degree their perceptions agreed or disagreed.

A random sample of middle schools was generated from the data in the student attitude section of the 1971 Michigan Assessment of Basic Skills, Grade 7. This data was made available by the Michigan Department of Education. The top and bottom quartiles were identified after recording all middle school scores in the state. Then a random table of numbers was used to select ten schools from each quartile. Each of these schools was visited.

The writer traveled throughout the state of Michigan during the late spring of 1972, to observe the twenty schools thus selected. Administrators were interviewed using a questionnaire which included the suggested practices and seven items involving school size, events which would have affected student attitude, and social classification of the school population. In addition, a teacher and student were also interviewed. They were asked the same five questions as the administrator, to determine their perceptions of the practices followed in each of the schools. Lastly, the school plant and equipment were observed by the writer. The results of these observations were added to the interview data recorded earlier.

The contingency table was used to determine the relationship between schools scoring low and high on student attitude and the various practices and procedures implemented. This Chi-square test was utilized at the .05 level of significance. In addition to determining the relationship between practices in low and high attitude schools, this table provided percentages to describe the degree of implementation of the specific practices. The percentage of implementation in low and high quartile schools was included as was the total percentage.

The same statistical treatment was used in the three special treatment sections (school size, social classification of the student population, and events which may have affected student attitude).

A simple correlation was used in questions asked administrators and teachers. This statistic indicated the similarity or lack of similarity in perceptions of the five practices. The correlation was also used to evaluate the five responses reported by administrators and students.

Findings

The major null hypothesis was: No difference will be found in the practices of ten randomly selected middle schools scoring in the lowest quartile of middle schools, and ten randomly selected middle schools scoring in the highest quartile of middle schools as identified by ranking middle schools on the student attitude section of the 1971 Michigan Assessment Test of Basic Skills, Grade 7.

The null sub-hypothes were: The student attitudes in schools scoring in the lowest and highest quartiles in student attitudes are unrelated to the specific practices.

The significance level for the major hypothesis was generated from the 73 null sub-hypotheses. The writer did not anticipate the results which the research revealed. Seventy-two of the 73 null sub-hypotheses were not rejected -- a most impressive statistical result and contrary to what might be expected. While the results were very repetitive, the conclusions should not be taken for granted. The impressiveness of the results was built upon the very repetition of non-rejection of the null sub-hypotheses. The research clearly indicated that the major null hypothesis should not be rejected and therefore, there was no significant differences in the practices of schools scoring in the lowest and highest quartile on student attitude which was the most important finding of the study.

The same results were recorded for the three special-question sections on school size, social classification, and events which may have affected student attitude. Each Chi-square value lacked significance and the null sub-hypotheses were not rejected.

Through the use of simple correlation, it became evident that the perceptions of administrators and teachers were reasonably similar. Three of the five questions asked of each group resulted in coefficients ranging from .5 to .9. The five questions asked of administrators and students had an identical range of correlation. In addition, the students perceived one practice as occurring more frequently. This result indicated that the students had a more positive perception of the school.

The last part of the study described the degree to which observed practices were implemented. The total percentages were emphasized because there was not a statistically significant difference in practices between those schools in the lowest quartile on student attitude, and those in the highest quartile. Of the 59 practices for which Alexander and Eichhorn specifically recommended levels of implementation, 54.79%, or slightly more than one-half, reached the appropriate level. This means that 45.21% of the practices were not followed. In terms of recommendations of the authorities, the practies were followed slightly more than half of the time. In short, middle schools were doing only about half of what should be done -- a reason for grave concern. There were also recommended practices for which no level of implementation was given. These practices included such areas as independent study, team teaching, continuous progress programs, hours of inservice, number of activity programs, and proportion of exploratory and elective programs.

Although no identifiable level of implementation was recommended by the authorities, the degree to which these practices were used was low.

The degree to which all 73 practices were implemented was less than complimentary to the middle schools in Michigan that scored in the lowest and highest quartiles on student attitudes.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

1. On the basis of the 73 practices examined, there were no significant differences existing between middle schools scoring in the lowest quartile and those scoring in the highest quartile on the state test of student attitude. These practices encompassed the areas of staff and organization; student activities; guidance; instructional programs; school plant and equipment.

2. There were no significant differences between Michigan middle schools scoring in the lowest and highest quartiles on the state test of student attitudes, and the school size, social class of the student populations, and events which may have affected student attitude.

3. Administrators and teachers perceived the practices of their respective middle schools quite similarly.

4. Administrators and students perceived the practices of their respective middle schools quite similarly with the student perception being slightly more positive.

5. Schools scoring in the lowest and highest quartiles on student attitude only implemented slightly more than one-half of the practices recommended by national middle school authorities.

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ED214278

THE EMERGING MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

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Introduction

The middle school movement, while only in its infancy, has had a significant impact on American public education. Interest in it has progressed from investigation of its history and general influence to more specific areas of concern and questions about its future. This study involved positing a description of the emerging middle school language arts program.

The Procedure

The procedure included several distinct phases. The first objective was to determine a series of propositions characterizing the program being described in the literature. The number of sources used for information totaled twenty-six middle school language arts curriculum guides and general proposals, and forty-six journal articles. The literature was analyzed for repeated points and strains of emphasis. The result was a series of eight characteristics which served to describe the basic program being portrayed in the literature.

The second objective was to build a description of actual practices in the schools. To do this, questionnaires based on the eight characteristics were presented to middle school educators for comment. First, at the 1976 National Middle School Conference, in St. Louis, Missouri, fifty principals and language arts department chairpersons were asked to rate on a scale of one to five, the degree to which their language arts department accepted and implemented each of the propositions. Second, nineteen noted authorities at the conference were asked to rate the degree to which they felt language arts departments currently accepted the propositions and also were likely to implement them in the near future.

After the questionnaires were completed, the median and mean responses to each proposition were calculated for both groups. Conclusions were drawn from these statistics that described the nature of the program emerging in the schools.

The last objective was to discuss the value of such a study, the implications of the results, and the question raised by it. To do this, the description of the program from the literature was compared to the picture of the program in practice in the schools. The final product was a view of the emerging middle school language arts program.

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Study of the Literature

The literature was analyzed from two viewpoints. First, it was examined for repeated emphasis. In summary, the conclusions drawn from this exercise were that the literature described the following program:

1. The language arts program fits the nature of the adolescent: it grows from what is known about him.

2. The program is student-centered: it is humanized, sensitized, positive, and non-competitive.

3. The program is sequential: it builds from the elementary to the high school.

4. The program is flexible: it is open, allows for change, has room to grow, and is experimental.

5. The program stresses process: it involves discovery, problem-solving, experience, and creativity.

6. The program stresses basic skills: it emphasizes reading, writing, spelling, grammar, speaking, and listening.

7. The program is individualized: it takes into consideration levels of achievement, rates of learning, continued progress, and different learning styles.

8. The program is innovative: it incorporates a variety of methods, materials, and media.

The examples of the literature were next classified by their relation to a student-centered curriculum. Each was compared to a continuum ranging from a highly student-centered, i.e., espousing middle school philosophy, to highly subject-centered, i.e., espousing junior high philosophy. The conclusions were that all of the literature examined displayed a preponderance of student-centered characteristics or at least exhibited a balance between student-centered and subject-centered emphases. Highly subject-centered curricula were not in evidence in middle school literature.

Survey Results

The data collected from the questionnaires, shown in Table #1, separated into two categories. First, the information received from the middle school principals and language arts department chairpersons was analyzed. The following ideas appear to have surfaced:

1. In general, what is accepted, is felt to be implemented.

2. The first characteristic that is accepted and implemented is a basic skills program.

3. The next descriptive areas accepted, and implemented, relate to an innovative, flexible program.

4. The area with the widest range in degrees of acceptance and implementation refers to individualized instruction.

5. Two of the major tenets of the middle school movement, that the program fits the nature of the child, and is student-centered, are the last to be accepted and implemented.

6. Another major tenet of the middle school movement, that the program be process-oriented, does not appear to be readily accepted.

Table #1

The Emerging Middle School and its Language Arts Program

Degree of Acceptance	Degree of Implementation
1. Unacceptable	1. Not Implemented
2. Questionable	2. Weakly Implemented
3. Accept With Reservations	3. Average Implementation
4. Accept in General	4. Strongly Implemented
5. Endorse Completely	5. Fully Implemented

	Degree of Acceptance	Degree of Implementation
	Mean/Median	Mean/Median
	Educators/Authorities	
1. The language arts program fits the nature of the adolescent: It grows from what is known about him.	4.08/3.52 4/4	3.14/2.83 3/3
2. The program is student-centered: it is humanized, sensitized, positive, and non-competitive.	4.06/3.89 4/4	3.04/2.44 3/2
3. The program is sequential: it builds from the elementary to the high school	4.50/4.31 5/5	3.54/2.83 4/3
4. The program is flexible: it is open, allows for change, has room to grow, and is experimental.	4.38/4.21 4/4	3.56/2.89 3/3
5. The program stresses process: it involves discovery, problem-solving, experience, and creativity.	4.12/4.05 5/4-5	3.32/2.88 3/3
6. The program stresses basic skills: it emphasizes reading, writing, spelling, grammar, speaking, and listening.	4.72/4.31 5/5	3.98/3.55 4/4
7. The program is individualized: it takes into consideration levels of achievement, rates of learning, continued progress, and different learning styles.	3.70/4.26 5/5	3.30/2.55 3/2-3

Table #1 (Cont'd.)

8. The program is innovative: it incorporates a variety of methods, materials, and media.	4.28/4.42 5/5	3.60/3.16 3/3

Second, the data collected from middle school authorities were analyzed. According to their responses and their personal comments, they appeared to view current practice of middle school language arts according to the following points:

1. They see basic skills and an innovative program being accepted and implemented first.

2. Wide ranges of opinion of these individuals on the eight conclusions do not appear.

3. On the following items, they do not view the degree of acceptance and the degree of implementation as being paticularly close: an individualized program, a sequential program, a program that fits the nature of the adolescent.

4. They view many of the basic tenets of the middle school philosophy as being accepted and implemented last.

5. They stress the need for work, thought, and study on the part of college and public school personnel.

6. Their comments indicate they are pessimistic toward the future of the middle school language arts program.

Finally, the responses of the two groups were compared. To add another dimension to the study, the similarities and the differences of the reactions were noted. First, there were several likenesses. Both groups responded that the program is primarily committed to basic skills. Also, the two sets of data suggested that in practice middle school language arts programs are not based on the major principles upon which the middle school movement was founded: the program grows from what is known about the early adolescent, and it is a student-centered program. In addition, the replies indicated that the programs that are being instituted are innovative programs. Likewise, there was agreement that even though instruction in a program for the middle schooler should be individualized, there are few schools which successfully implement this. Finally, it seemed viable to draw the general conclusion that both sets of data indicated that schools are more comfortable and have more expertise in dealing with schedules, methods, media, materials, and basic tools of language than humanistic, process-oriented, student-centered activities.

Second, differences surfaced between the two sets of data. Replies did not differ, however, so much on specific conclusions as they did on the degree of implementation of the conclusions. In general, the individuals in the schools responded that there is greater degrees of acceptance, and, in particular, implementation of the characteristics than did the authorities.

Discussion

The value of this study lies in its relation to ongoing research in the middle school in its contribution to the bank of knowledge forming on middle school language arts, and in the points it raises for further discussion. For concentration here, we will note some of the questions that were suggested after analysis of the data.

For instance, an individual school might undertake self-examination with these questions. First could be asked, what is our particular concept of a middle school, of a middle school language arts program? Second, if we find our understanding of middle school philosophy to be sound, have we adopted and implemented it in our school? If not, why not? Third, have we accepted and implemented central issues of the middle school movement: a program which fits the nature of the child and is student-centered? Fourth, what is our concept of a basic skills program? How did this concept enter our curriculum? Was it from current planning for from the junior high curriculum? Fifth, what is the state of individualized instruction in our school?

Other questions that were raised could be discussed by a broader middle school community. First, can the middle school philosophy and language arts program described in the literature be instituted in the American public school? If so, how and at what price? Second, are the educators in the colleges and universities able to describe actual practice more accurately than the educators in the schools? If so, what does this imply? Third, how can middle school staff members and authorities work to correct possible causes for the schools' not implementing or accepting a program based on middle school philosophy? Fourth, what attitude and/or actions should be taken in light of the pessimistic outlook for the future of the middle school language arts program that the authorities portrayed?

Finally, after analysis of the data was completed, one area in particular seemed to be open for further discussion. The study showed that the literature described programs that are student-centered and teach basic skills. However, the response from both groups did not indicate high acceptance and implementation of the student-centered characteristics. If the data and analysis are accurate, several points could be raised here.

First, can a program be both student-centered and insure a mastery of basic skills? Is there a dichotomy between the characteristics of a student-centered curriculum and the discipline, drill, and correctness associated with the learning of basic skills? Has promoting a student-centered, basic skills curriculum insured a continual struggle for attention from the two schools of thought and doomed a program to failure?

Second, should one area receive more emphasis at the expense of the other? If so, which one? In addition, how is this question resolved?

Third, are middle school educators equally adept at instituting a student-centered and a basic skills program? Are resources available and equal for instituting both programs? Is proper educational training in evidence for establishing both programs? Furthermore, does the desire and/or need co-exist for both emphases in the curriculum? Finally, are there other

specific problems that hamper institution of either of these areas in the middle school language arts program?

Summary

The process of studying the emerging middle school language arts program is necessary. Data must be gathered from many sources to supply answers and, equally important, to raise questions. The complexity of the problem should only serve to challenge middle school educators to strive continually to produce a program that is of value to the transescent.

This one study compared a program being described in a sampling of the literature with acceptance and institution of this program in fifty middle schools. Also, nineteen noted middle school authorities gave their opinions on the acceptance and institution of this program. In addition, they added further comments concerning the future of the language arts curriculum.

We will need to be involved daily with many studies such as this one if we are to monitor the middle school curriculum as it continues to grow and change.

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ED214279

A MODEL FOR A MIDDLE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM BASED ON DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF STUDENTS

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Introduction

The middle school has emerged in the last two decades as a school focused toward, organized around, and dedicated to facilitating the development of the pre- and early adolescent, often called the transescent (Eichhorn, 1968). There is a strongly implied guidance function in the middle school based on developmental tasks of students. However, very little description of the counselor's role or the components of the guidance program in the middle school has been attempted. The purpose of this study was to develop a model for a middle school guidance program, based on the developmental tasks of transescents.

The Problem

The role of the guidance counselor in the middle school had not been clearly defined, nor had guidance practices based on developmental tasks of the middle school-aged child been clearly outlined. While the literature is replete with references to the importance of guidance in the middle school (Cole, 1977), there has been no in-depth exploration, definition, or complete guide detailing what comprises middle school guidance. This study developed a model to define the guidance counselor's function in the middle school and investigated the kind of school in which such a model could be implemented.

The Literature

A review of literature shows considerable research on developmental tasks of transescence; a more limited amount described middle school guidance programs. Table #1 summarizes tasks suggested by various authors in five areas of development: physical, social, psychological, cognitive, and career. Generally, the developmental tasks addressed by this model are these: (1) achieving acceptance by peer group; (2) beginning to achieve independence from adults; (3) understanding and accepting body changes of adolescence; (4) exploring and expanding career interests; and (5) beginning to resolve moral conflicts based on a wider view of the world.

A few educators had addressed the concept of guidance in the middle schools. Brod (1968) advocated a guidance program specifically designed for the unique population of the middle school, outlining several areas which should be included. A position paper for the American School Counselor Association on the role of the middle school counselor (ASCA, 1974) suggested as areas of emphasis: (1) individual counseling; (2) consultation with the school staff; (3) parent involvement; and (4) community contact. A survey by Bohlinger (1977) concluded that Ohio middle school guidance counselors saw five components as necessary in a middle school guidance program: the counselor, the advisor, student-teacher interaction, peer counseling, and an exploratory program. He found much discrepancy between guidance as

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described in the literature and guidance as practiced in the schools. New York City (1972) and South Carolina (1975) have developed materials which provide some guidance for middle school counselors.

Methodology

By organizing (1) information on developmental tasks of transescents; (2) concepts of middle school, including structure and organization; and (3) theory of guidance and counseling practices, a model for a middle school guidance program was developed (Cole, 1977). A 3 by 3 by 4 dimensional figure was used to organize the content of the model, patterned after a cube designed by Morrill, Oetting, and Hurst (1974). The dimensions of the figure (Figure #1) have these descriptions:

A. Roles of the guidance counselor - (1) Counselor; (2) Consultant; (3) Coordinator; and (4) Curriculum Specialist.

B. Target of guidance activity - (1) Individual; (2) Group; (3) School/ Community.

C. Purpose of guidance program - (1) Remediation; (2) Prevention; (3) Development.

Table #1

Summary of Developmental Tasks of
Pre- and Early Adolescents

Author	Tasks
Piaget	Cognitive Development: 1. Moving from centration to decentration 2. Acquiring categorization skills 3. Thinking differentially
Havighurst	1. Organizing knowledge of social and physical reality 2. Learning to work well with peer group 3. Becoming physically independent
Erickson	School Tasks: 1. Developing perserverance 2. Learning laws of "tool world" 3. Beginning to achieve sexual identity 4. Considering a career
Konopka	1. Achieving physical and sexual maturity 2. Withdrawing from adult protection 3. Defining selves
Sutton-Smith	1. Achieving peer group acceptance 2. Developing a sense of justice

Table #1 (Cont'd.)

Author	Tasks
Mitchell	Resolving moral conflicts related to: 1. Sexual behavior 2. Independence 3. Conscience 4. Conformity
Pikunas	1. Regaining body control 2. Identifying with peers 3. Developing social sensitivity 4. Organizing the self 5. Extending interests and activities 6. Attaining self-regulation
Super	1. Growth State: a. Fantasy sub-stage b. Interest sub-stage c. Capacity sub-stage 2. Entering Exploration Stage Learning about likes, dislikes, and abilities; relating these to careers
Ginzberg	1. Moving from fantasy period to tentative period 2. Becoming aware of interests, capacities, values, time, work requirements, and rewards of work 3. Entering realistic period
Bottoms and O'Kelley	1. Acquiring positive attitudes toward work and school 2. Relating knowledge of the self to work 3. Exploring broad occupational areas 4. Beginning to acquire employability skills

The roles of the guidance counselor are the focus for the development of the model. Following are descriptions of the roles.

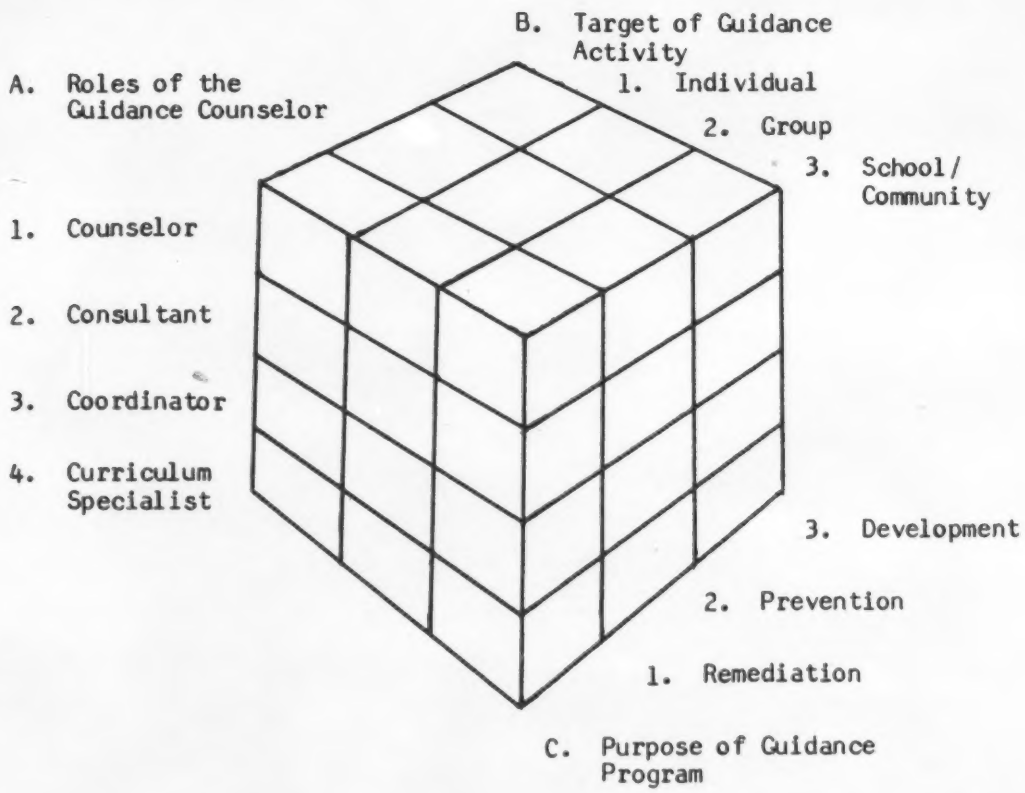
The Counselor is a trained professional who uses appropriate resources to assist in the client's total development according to mutually agreeable guidelines (Hutchins, 1976). In the middle school, counseling often centers around improving interpersonal relations with peers and adults; helping transescents clarify their values as they enter a wider world; resolving crises regarding death, divorce, etc.; and helping students understand and adjust to physical, emotional, and social changes they experience as they get older.

The Consultant role is "an approach to helping those persons who have some responsibility for students, facilitate students' development" (Miles, 1976), with the ultimate goal of humanizing the educational process. The consultant in the middle school attempts to manipulate the child's environment

to design the most advantageous climate for achievement of developmental tasks. This may include helping adults understand why peer interaction is so important and so intense, why the transescent exhibits such abrupt shifts in mood, and how sudden growth spurts cause physical awkwardness and resultant self-consciousness. The consultant who sees the role as primarily developmental and preventive will be able to help teachers and administrators identify school practices which are contrary to students' development.

Figure #1

Middle School Guidance Program



The Coordinator in a guidance program refers the student to a more appropriate, or a more skilled, helper than the school provides. An elementary counseling position paper defines coordination as ". . . integrating the resources of the school and community -- ideas, things, and people -- to meet the developmental needs of the individual" (ACES-ASCA, 1974), avoiding duplication of effort and insuring follow-through. Occa-

sionally, achievingdevelopmental tasks assumes such proportions for transescents and their families that the school counselor is not sufficiently trained to deal with the situation. Referral is then in order. The counselor also frequently becomes the recipient of, and disseminator and interreter of information from referral sources.

The Curriculum Specialist role is basically a teaching function wherein the counselor conducts group guidance for students, inservice trainig for teachers and administrators, and activites such as parent education for parents. Stamm and Nissen (1971) describe the role as an attempt to humanize the school by integrating an affective approach with cognitive elements of the curriculum. The counselor conducts group guidance activities, as well as serving as a resource person in the areas of career education, interpersonal skills, and appraisal of students.

Each section of the model consists of a discussion of what the concept is, a description of what the role would be in a middle school in terms of developmental tasks of the students, and a list of activities to use in implementing the concept. A model bibliography includes sources for theoretical background. The model supports a guidance program which is highly preventive and developmental in nature, stressing group work.

To validate the model, a draft was circulated to ten guidance counselors in middle schools in Pennsylvania, Vest Virginia, Virginia, and Georgia, selected according to their geographic location in urban, suburban, or rural setting in order to determine how appropriate practicing middle school counselors found the model. Names of schools with exemplary programs were collected from these sources: Dr. Mary Compton, Professor of Education, University of Georgia; Mr. John Cook, Supervisor of Guidance Services, State of Virginia; Dr. Tom Gatewood, Professor of Education, Central Michigan University; Dr. Joseph Kloba, Assistant Professor of Education, Radford College; the National Middle School Resource Center; Ms. Judy Tindall, former Vice-President for Middle/Junior High Schools, ASCA; Dr. Gay Whitlock, Assistant Professor of Education, University of Georgia; and Ms. Therese M. Wilson, Guidance Specialist, State of West Virginia. Counselors in the ten schools were sent copies of the model and asked to evaluate it using a questionnaire developed by the researcher, which asked them to indicate the degree to which they implemented each section of the model and how important they thought that section was, as well as how clearly it was written. An open-ended question invited further comment. Revisions were made in the draft based on counselors' responses.

A case study approach was used to compare the characteristics of the schools -- fictitiously named -- with the degree of implementation reported by the counselors. Information about the schools and counselors was collected by personal interviews conducted when the researcher visited each school.

Analysis of the Data

Thirteen female and five male counselors were interviewed in the ten schools. Almost all had been trained as secondary counselors, though several had elementary, junior high, or middle school teaching backgrounds.

None had any course work in middle school counseling; only two had had course work specific to the middle school. Student-counselor ratios ranged from a low of 340/1 to a high of 600/1. Eight percent had a system-wide supervisor of guidance. Most were active in their professional counselors' organizations, some in middle school organizations, and most attended conferences whenever possible. Several had presented programs on middle school guidance to state or national audiences. All but one were eager to discuss their guidance programs; what the researcher observed in the schools seemed congruent with what the counselors had reported on paper.

An analysis of how the counselors spent their time is contained in Figure #2. Sixty percent of the counselors reported that they spent more than half of their time in counseling. They reported working with students in self-awareness, conflict resolution, values clarification, and personal decision-making, spending more time with students but also counseling with parents and teachers (except one counselor). Less than one-fourth of most of the counselors' time was spent in the consulting role, with about one-third involved in peer counseling programs. Most counselors reported spending twenty percent or less in coordinating services with orientation activities between school levels a high priority. Counselors spent from thirty-three to two percent of their time as curriculum specialists, in such areas as group guidance, inservice training for teachers, parent training, and specific curricula for students such as human sexuality and career education.

There was a wide range in the amount of counselor time spent with groups and with individuals. Some counselors spent as much as seventy percent of their time with groups, while others devoted only fifteen percent. The mean percent for all ten schools was 42% of counselor time spent in group work in areas such as group counseling, group guidance, and consulting with groups.

Findings

Sixty percent of the schools included in the sample appeared to have a guidance program that was preventive and developmental, as well as remedial. All of the schools appeared to implement crisis counseling and conflict resolution at a high level, with most emphasizing working with parents and teachers, coordination, and curriculum specialist activities. Some schools operated in a developmental approach much more than others, emphasizing peer leadership programs, group guidance activities, and sex education. Four schools seemed to have more than the others to emphasize the teaching role of the guidance professional. These counselors took a much more assertive role in their schools than simply waiting for students or others to drop into the office, and did not confine themselves to working primarily with problems.

The three schools which appeared to implement the model to the greatest degree shared these characteristics: (1) strong administrative support, (2) a supervisor of guidance at the division level, (3) counselors active in professional organizations, (4) written guidance programs, (5) self-developed guidance materials, and (6) buildings designed as middle schools. These characteristics were generally missing in the three schools with programs least like the model.

Figure #2

Percent of Time Counselors Spent in Four Roles

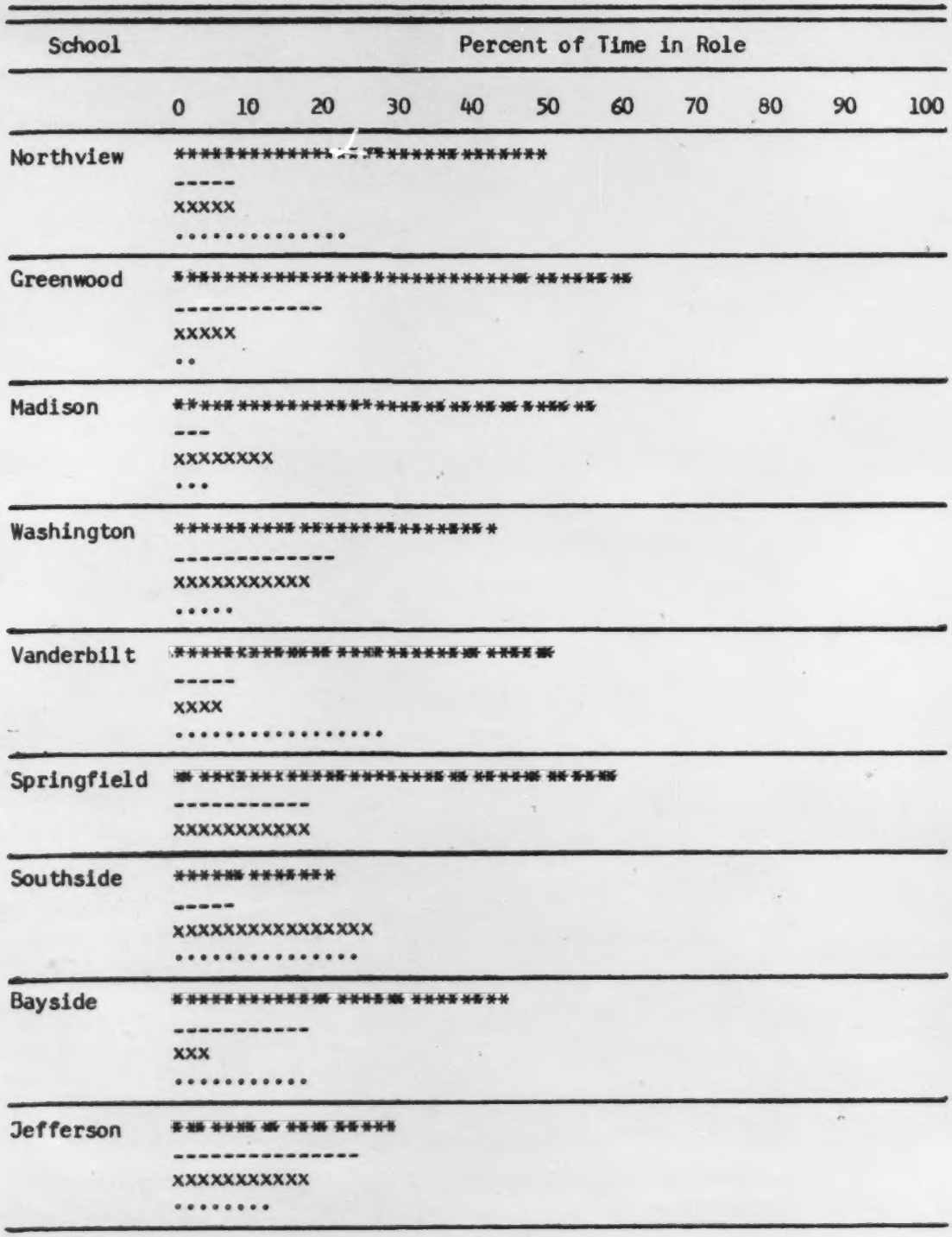


Figure #2 (Cont'd.)

School	Percent of Time in Role										
	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Ardmore	**********										
	----------										
	xxxx										
	.....										

Key: * = Counseling Role
- = Consulting Role
x = Coordinating Role
. = Curriculum Specialist Role

Conclusions and Implcations

Based on counselors' answers and on the researcher's observations, these conclusions can be drawn:

1. The model contains appropriate content and is clearly written.

2. The model can be implemented in middle schools with certain characteristics.

3. Favorable conditions for implementation include supportive principals, supervisors of guidance, actively involved counselors, counselors who see themselves as part of the instructional (not administrative) staff, group work, written guidance programs and self-developed materials, and a supportive community.

The model as proposed can be used as a plan for a middle school guidance program. However, areas which still need to be investigated include activities actually being performed in middle school guidance programs, the relationship between the professional activity level of counselors and the quality of the guidance program, the effect of division-level supervision on a school's program, and the responsibilities of those other than counselors in the middle school guidance program.

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ED214280

A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE CURRENT LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION OF EIGHTEEN BASIC MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPLES IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

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Introduction

Since the early 1960's, the number of middle schools has been increasing rapidly. During the 1965-66 school year, findings showed that twenty-nine states were operating a total of 449 middle schools (Cuff, 1967). Today, there are 4,060 middle schools in the United States (Brooks, 1978).

Middle school organizations are also expanding. More than seventeen states have a middle school organization and the National Middle School Association, which was organized in 1973, now has a membership totaling more than 1,200. Currently, eight states require middle school teacher certification (Gatewood, 1977).

Although the middle school movement is accelerating, there is little if any, information available which demonstrates the degree of relationship between the middle school principles as presented in the literature and the operational programs presently functioning in Missouri middle schools.

Problem and Hypothesis

The nature of this study was to examine the current level of implementation of eighteen basic middle school principles in the 147 Missouri middle schools. One major hypothesis was established for this study: There is no significant difference in the application of the basic middle school principles in middle schools having the titles of elementary school, middle school, or junior high school.

Review of Related Literature

Middle schools are frequently begun for social, economical, or political reasons rather than educational benefits that result from the grade organization (Murphy, 1965). Junior high schools that began for those identical reasons never achieved their full potential in communities where they were an expedient method of solving a local problem instead of an evolution from a well-defined educational philosophy (Schoo, n.d.).

Riegle studied 136 Michigan middle schools and found that "the rapid increase in the number of schools labeled as middle schools has not been accompanied by a high degree of application of those principles considered by authorities in the field to be basic to middle school education" (Riegle, 1971). In fact, his study provided data that indicated that there were less than a 50% application by middle schools in Michigan (46.9%) of those principles (Riegle, 1971). Kramer, who did a similar study in California found a 53% implementation of the basic principles of middle school education (Kramer, n.d.).

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On the other hand, Schoo, (n.d.) found that the best organizational structure for emerging adolescents is a grade five through eight plan. Trauschke, in a study in Miami, Florida, "found eight significant differences favoring the middle school out of thirty comparisons, although none of the comparisons favored the junior high" (Trauschke, 1970).

It seems evident that the research on the middle school is presently inconclusive. The number of schools converting to the middle school is accelerating. The number of state middle school organizations is increasing and the impetus from the National Middle School Association is being felt. Since the birth of the National Middle School Association in 1973, its membership has grown to more than 1,200 members.

Instrument Employed

The questionnaire developed and used by Riegle (1971) was employed to survey the current application of the eighteen basic middle school principles in this study. The questionnaire was designed to provide data for the eighteen basic middle school principles presented in Table #1, which lists the principles and the survey questions related to each principle.

Table #1

Survey Question Numbers Related to Principles

Principles	Survey Question Numbers
A - Continuous Progress	1, 2
B - Multi-Media	3, 4, 5, 6, 38, 39
C - Flexible Schedule	7, 8, 40
D - Social Experiences	9, 10, 41, 42, 56
E - Physical Experiences	11, 57, 58
F - Intramural Activities	12, 13, 43, 59
G - Team Teaching	14, 15, 16, 17
H - Planned Gradualism	18
I - Exploratory/Enrichment	19, 20, 21, 44, 45
J - Guidance Services	22, 23, 24, 60
K - Independent Study	46, 47, 61
L - Basic Learning Skills	25, 26, 48, 62
M - Creative Experiences	27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 49
N - Student Security	32, 33
O - Evaluation Practices	34, 35, 50
P - Community Relations	36, 37, 51, 52
Q - Student Services	53
R - Auxiliary Staffing	54, 55

Procedure

In July, 1977, the questionnaire, cover letter, and an envelope with a return address and stamp were sent to 147 principals of Missouri schools that met the definition of middle schools.

Mean scores, standard deviations, mean percentages of the maximum possible scores yielded by the survey form were calculated on each of the basic principles for each of the sampled schools. In addition, a t-test was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference in the means of each principle for the elementary schools, middle schools, and junior high schools studied.

Report of Data

The data presented in the following tables were collected from the results of the survey questionnaire returned by 101 schools.

Table #2

Questionnaires Sent and Returned

Title of School	Sent	Returned	Percentage
Elementary School	19	9	47.4
Middle School	50	36	72.0
Junior High School	78	56	71.8
Totals	147	101	68.7

Table #3

Means of Schools With the Title of Elementary School

Principles	Mean	Maximum	% of Application
A - Continuous Progress	2.14	8	26.8
B - Multi-Media	20.29	33	61.5
C - Flexible Schedule	5.56	18	31.8
D - Social Experiences	7.67	20.7	37.1
E - Physical Experiences	25.75	31.7	81.2
F - Intramural Activities	10.0	23.7	42.1
G - Team Teaching	2.20	12	18.3
H - Planned Gradualism	1.33	3	44.3
I - Exploratory/Enrichment	10.38	25.2	41.2
J - Guidance Services	13.14	23.7	55.4
K - Independent Study	8.17	16.2	50.4
L - Basic Learning Skills	17.86	25.7	69.5
M - Creative Experiences	8.50	21	40.5
N - Student Security	6.33	8	79.1
O - Evaluation Practices	7.43	16	46.4
P - Community Relations	4.22	16	26.4
Q - Student Services	4.56	9	50.7
R - Auxiliary Staffing	2.50	8	31.3
Totals	158.03	318.9	49.6%

Table #4

Means of Schools With the Title of Middle School

Principles	Mean	Maximum	% of Application
A - Continuous Progress	2.65	8	33.1
B - Multi-Media	21.72	33	65.8
C - Flexible Schedule	3.80	18	21.1
D - Social Experiences	13.17	20.6	63.9
E - Physical Experiences	24.14	31.6	76.4
F - Intramural Activities	14.29	23.6	60.6
G - Team Teaching	2.65	12	22.1
H - Planned Gradualism	1.28	3	42.7
I - Exploratory/Enrichment	13.51	25.1	53.0
J - Guidance Services	13.89	23.6	58.9
K - Independent Study	6.26	16.1	38.9
L - Basic Learning Skills	15.31	25.6	59.8
M - Creative Experiences	10.71	21	51.0
N - Student Security	5.66	8	70.8
O - Evaluation Practices	7.59	16	47.4
P - Community Relations	6.63	16	41.4
Q - Student Services	6.19	9	68.8
R - Auxiliary Staffing	3.74	8	46.8
Totals	172.99	318.2	54.4

Table #5

Means of Schools With the Title of Junior High School

Principles	Mean	Maximum	% of Application
A - Continuous Progress	2.47	8	30.9
B - Multi-Media	22.35	33	67.8
C - Flexible Schedule	2.66	18	14.8
D - Social Experiences	9.11	16.7	54.6
E - Physical Experiences	20.37	27.7	73.6
F - Intramural Activities	10.92	19.7	55.4
G - Team Teaching	4.22	12	35.2
H - Planned Gradualism	0.77	3	25.7
I - Exploratory/Enrichment	12.47	24.1	51.7
J - Guidance Services	12.25	19.7	62.2
K - Independent Study	6.00	15.1	39.7
L - Basic Learning Skills	11.60	24.1	48.1
M - Creative Experiences	10.24	21	48.8
N - Student Security	4.62	8	57.8
O - Evaluation Practices	6.19	16	38.7
P - Community Relations	6.83	16	42.7
Q - Student Services	6.06	9	67.3
R - Auxiliary Staffing	3.53	8	44.1
Totals	152.66	299.1	51.0

Findings

1. Within each of the three types of schools surveyed, there was a wide range in the degree of application of the principles basic to the middle school concept.
2. Although the schools with the title of middle school were slightly higher (54.4%) in applying the basic principles than the elementary schools (49.6%) and the junior high schools (51.0%), the differences were relatively small.
3. The composite percentage score of 52.1% seemed to indicate that the middle schools in the State of Missouri have not implemented the basic middle school principles to a great degree.
4. The elementary schools, middle schools, and junior high schools in the study had similar priorities in applying the basic middle school principles. Those principles which required change from tradition ranked low in application, and the principles which focused on students' needs ranked high in application.
5. Schools with the title of middle school when compared with the elementary schools in the study made significant scores at the .05 level in the areas of social experiences, exploratory/enrichment programs, community relations, student services, and auxiliary staffing.
6. Schools with the title of middle school when compared with the junior high schools in the study made significant scores at the .05 level in the areas of flexible scheduling, social experiences, physical experiences, intramural activities, planned gradualism, basic learning skills, and student security factors.
7. Schools with the title of middle school were making a greater thrust in implementing the basic middle school principles than were the elementary and junior high schools in this study.
8. Twenty-five percent of the elementary schools in the study used a traditional schedule compared with .69 percent of the middle schools and .91 percent of the junior high schools.
9. Evening social functions progressively increased at the higher grade level.
10. Competition in physical education was greater in the sampled junior high schools than in the elementary and middle schools.
11. In the schools sampled, the teacher's role as a counselor was stronger in the middle schools than in the elementary and junior high schools.
12. Physical experiences in all three types of schools sampled had the highest degree of application.
13. Intramurals had a higher priority than interscholastic sports in the middle schools; the reverse was true of the junior high schools studied.

Conclusions

1. A review of the Missouri middle schools studies revealed that the schools with the titles of elementary school, middle school, and

junior high school were more similar than different in terms of implementation of the basic middle school principles.

2. The Missouri middle schools have not implemented to a great degree the basic middle school principles and thus exist more in theory than in reality.
3. Further implementation of the principles basic to the middle school concept will requires administrators to part with tradition and take a leadership role in selling the staff and community on the values of the principles.
4. With the middle school movement relatively new in Missouri, a greater thrust in community relations is needed.

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ED214281

A DELPHI STUDY TO DETERMINE NEEDED MIDDLE SCHOOL RESEARCH

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Middle school education, as an area of inquiry, is still in its infancy. The practices associated with middle schooling generally have as their antecedents a combination of theoretical premises and practical realities. It lacks, for the most part, a large body of empirical literature establishing the validity of recommended practices. Rather, it relies on what should theoretically work or what is responsive to some immediate reality to organize and conduct its operations.

The research on middle schooling which does exist is, according to Wiles and Thomason (1975), "of remarkably low quality. Most of the studies to date have been either the result of dissertation work, or studies by junior high and middle school advocates. For this reason alone, the objectivity of such research is questionable."

The paucity of middle school research is most puzzling since there appear to be so many very fundamental questions which have either not been answered in existing literature, or have not been addressed in a systematic manner. As an example, Gatewood (1971, 1973) and George (1973) report that it is impossible to determine, from the available research, which organizational patterns or age levels are most appropriate for the middle school.

Partly because researchers have been unable to determine, precisely, the nature of the institution under study, questions regarding curriculum design, program content, facilities, staffing, teacher and administrator roles have remained unexamined (George, 1973; Gatewood, 1971; Ruebel, 1972). As an alternative to the study of the institution, Wiles and Thomason (1975) propose that there is a need to study, systematically, the qualities or practices of middle schooling in an effort to determine those which have a beneficial impact on students. Particularly needed, they continue, "is a method of identifying middle schools which, in their practices, follow the guidelines of the middle school literature."

Despite recommendations from those who have reviewed middle school research, the middle school movement clearly lacks a consensus on research priorities. In the absence of empirically determined priorities, middle school research is likely to continue its rather amorphus growth, responding to the idiosyncratic interests of individual researchers rather than the perceived needs of middle school educators. For this reason, it is important to establish, for those who approach research with limited time and resources, a listing of priorities which represent significant areas of needed inquiry. The present study was undertaken to assist in establishing those priorities.

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Procedures

The Delphi technique was employed as a method for establishing research priorities among National Middle School Association members. Delphi is a

method for obtaining group judgments on factual matters which lack precise information, or on values where information is a matter of opinion (Sweigert and Schabaker, 1974). The value of the technique is found in its potential for deriving a set of middle school research priorities from a large group of respondents with varying opinions and values. As such, it serves as a model for achieving consensus within a group which, because of its size and geographical diversity, prohibits the use of other group decision-making procedures.

The iterative structure of the Delphi technique distinguishes it from other group decision-making processes (Skutch and Hall, 1973). During the final stages, participants in the process report their perceptions in light of their previous ratings and feedback on the judgments reported by all participants in previous rounds. According to Sweigert and Schabaker (1974), the process of making successive judgments with intervening feedback reduces the variance in the responses of the participants. This convergence of opinion seems to be greater on the first round after feedback than on any other subsequent round (Cyphert and Gant, 1970).

Before priorities on research topics could be established, it was necessary to identify the areas which would receive further scrutiny. The identification of research areas was the objective of the study's first stage. In January of 1978, 400 members of the National Middle School Association were randomly selected from the Association's mailing list. Since the NMSA represents diverse interests (teachers, administrators, university personnel and parents), the random sample technique was critical in soliciting the opinions of representatives from each interest group. Each member of the sample group received a letter explaining the study and a form on which to list three nominations for "needed areas of research in middle school education." One hundred forty-eight (148) people responded to the initial mailing, a return of 37%. Any research topic that was suggested by two or more respondents was included on a listing of research topics. This procedure resulted in a list of thirty-six topics.

In the second stage of the study, the list of 36 research topics was mailed to each of the original respondents (n = 148). The directions for this form requested each participant to rate each research topic on a 1 to 7 scale, with 7 being "useful" and 1 being "useless." The 36 statements were arranged in random order, but next to each was a number indicating the frequency with which the topic was nominated in the original survey. Ninety-four useable responses were returned from the second mailing, a return of 64%. The data were analyzed to ascertain the mean rating for each item.

During the third stage of the study, participants who returned the second form received a list of the 36 research topics on which was identified their own rating of each area and that indicated by the group mean. Directions requested each participant to consider his or her ratings in light of the rating given each statement by the group as a whole, and to again indicate a priority rating from 1 to 7. Of the 94 participants who received information in stage two of the study, 77 returned useable forms (82%).

The seventy-seven returns of the third mailing were examined to determine the extent to which they constituted a reasonable representation of the

Association's membership. Representing 39 states, the responses came from administrators at the building and central office levels (67%), teachers (22%) and "others," primarily university faculty (11%). Based on available demographics, the sample appears to be a reasonable reflection of the Association's membership, with, perhaps a slightly disproportional response from administrators.

Results and Interpretation

In Appendix #1, problems are grouped into five broad research areas. Means and standard deviations are reported for each problem.

Research in the area of middle school organization is apparently needed, particularly with respect to staffing, appropriate curriculum selection, and scheduling. It should not be surprising in the present climate that investigations into curriculum to develop basic skills were rated quite useful ($m = 5.72$) with substantial agreement ($s = 0.98$) among respondents. However, respondents also identified a need for researching exploratory offerings to enrich the core curriculum ($m = 5.68$)

Identifying distinguishing characteristics of middle schools versus junior high schools and determining the "best" grade arrangement for a middle school were regarded as less important. Respondents seemed more concerned about what works with students of the middle years than creating a definition "per se" of the middle school. Perhaps respondents believed that the question of a "definition" has already been adequately explored.

There appears to be a strong need to identify the physiological and psychological development characteristics affecting school performance which are unique to students at this level. The very high usefulness score ($m = 6.18$) and relatively low standard deviation ($s = 1.08$) indicates substantial agreement among respondents on the positive value of research addressing this problem.

High priority should be given to research determining successful teaching techniques for middle school students. Of particular interest are investigations into successful classroom management procedures ($m = 6.01$). The low standard deviation ($s = 0.88$) indicates substantial agreement by respondents that research in this area would provide worthwhile information. Respondents also expressed interest in research to identify and develop successful techniques for motivating students and providing for individual differences.

Research to determine effective pre-service and in-service education for middle school personnel received high usefulness ratings by respondents. The high value for research into pre-service teacher training in particular ($m = 5.92$) indicates that respondents perceive a need for specialized training at the undergraduate level, yet are likely uncertain as to the appropriate nature of such training.

Finally, there seemed to be mild interest in how to elicit public support for middle school philosophies. However, the relatively low average ($m = 4.66$), as well as the somewhat high standard deviation ($s = 1.39$) indicating lack of agreement among respondents as to the profitability of this

research, should make investigations into this area a low priority item.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Examining the 36 research problems creates an urge to identify the "highest priority" and to find commonalities among high and low rated problems. However, the wisdom of doing either is debatable. The research problems may have been stated in generic terms so broad that is would be difficult to determine what triggered a response in a responder. Also, the measurement error in most cases is large enough to prohibit distinctions between priorities of adjacent items. Of course, there is a significant difference between items separated by several ranks. Recognizing the uncertainty of the task, a few conclusions are nevertheless desirable.

Applied research related to practices and procedures that result in more effectively educating middle school students should be emphasized. National Middle School Association members are interested in what "works with students" and "how to do it." There is less concern about comparisons of junior high schools and middle schools. Apparently Wiles and Thomason's suggestion to study the qualities or practices of middle schooling in an attempt to determine those which have a beneficial impact on students is supported by practitioners in the field (Wiles and Thomason, 1975). Theoretical research, especially in the areas of psychological and physiological development and the impact upon learning, may be useful. The middle school movement, however, has apparently reached the point where empirical investigations of its practices are needed. Curriculum development and evaluation, instructional techniques, staffing procedures and teacher training are areas of potentially useful middle school research.

Appendix #1 lists specific problems which should be given careful attention by researchers in the area. It is recommended that researchers, and those directing and funding research, refer to the ratings given these problems when assessing the potential utility of a proposed research topic.

Appendix #1

Usefulness Ratings of 36 Identified Research Problems in Middle Grade Education

Area	Problem	Mean (m)*	S.D. (s)
Organization of the Middle School			
(Middle School Plans)	Evaluating the interdisiplinary approaches currently used in the middle school.	5.18	1.07
	Analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of various middle school daily schedules.	5.06	1.39

Appendix #1 (Cont'd.)

Area	Problem	Mean (m)*	S.D. (s)
(Middle School Plans)			
	Constructing and evaluating criteria and models for evaluating middle schools.	4.99	1.34
	Comparing existing middle school practices with ideal middle school practices.	4.35	1.25
	Determining the best proportion of the school day to be devoted to exploratory courses as compared to basic courses.	4.32	1.58
	Identifying and validating the attributes which best distinguish middle schools from other school plans.	4.19	1.28
	Determining the most effective size (enrollment) for a middle school and for middle school classes.	3.86	1.34
	Determining the most effective grade organization for middle schools.	3.68	1.42
	Evaluating various middle school building designs and facilities.	3.22	1.26
(Middle School Programs)	Developing and evaluating a middle school curriculum that develops basic skills.	5.72	0.98
	Developing and evaluating exploratory offerings that should be included in the middle school curriculum.	5.68	0.85
	Identifying types of activity programs that are most beneficial for middle school students.	5.27	1.30

Appendix #1 (Cont'd.)

Area	Problem	Mean (m)*	S.D. (s)
(Middle School Programs)	Designing and validating a middle school reading program.	5.19	1.31
	Comparing the learning outcomes (cognitive, social, affective, psychomotor, etc.) of middle school programs with those of junior high school programs.	5.04	1.44
	Determining which components of the middle school program prepare students for successful high school performance.	4.92	1.54
	Assessing the effectiveness of various types of athletic programs for middle school students.	4.64	1.46
	Identifying and validating effective strategies for implementing career education in the middle school.	3.88	1.50
(Middle School Staff)	Identifying characteristics of successful middle school teachers.	6.18	1.08
	Identifying the characteristics of successful middle school administration.	5.58	1.18
	Identifying and validating a criteria for selecting a middle school staff.	5.09	1.29
Characterizing The Middle School Student	Identifying the unique developmental characteristics which impact on middle school student's learning.	6.19	1.08

Appendix #1 (Cont'd.)

Area	Problem	Mean (m)*	S.D. (s)
Teaching Middle School Students	Analyzing the effects of various management, organizational and disciplinary procedures on student behavior.	6.01	0.88
	Identifying and validating techniques for motivating middle school students.	5.66	1.25
	Analyzing instructional procedures designed to deal with individual differences.	5.56	0.90
	Analyzing and evaluating instructional strategies used in the middle school.	5.41	1.02
	Evaluating the effectiveness of different team teaching procedures in the middle school.	5.39	1.16
	Analyzing the effects of grouping procedures on academic and social-emotional growth.	5.38	1.12
	Identifying and validating systems for assessing and reporting pupil progress.	5.09	1.21
	Evaluating various counseling methods (individual, group, teacher led).	4.97	1.12
	Identifying and validating instruments for evaluating students' cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor development.	4.75	1.26
	Identifying and validating techniques for implementing computer-assisted instruction in the middle school.	2.47	1.24

Appendix #1 (Cont'd.)

Area	Problem	Mean (m)*	S.D. (s)
Training Middle School Teachers	Identifying and validating the components of an effective pre-service training program for middle school teachers and administrators.	5.92	1.17
	Evaluating procedures for re-training in-serivce teachers for middle school teaching.	5.69	1.16
	Identifying and validating the components of an effective inservice program for middle school professionals.	5.65	1.21
	Comparing the effectiveness of elementary, secondary, and middle school trained teachers and administrators.	4.34	1.41
Obtaining Public Support for the Middle School Concept.	Developing procedures to elicit public support for the middle school philosophy.	4.66	1.39

*Maximum possible rating = 7
Minimum possible rating = 1

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ED214282

SMALL GROUPS FOR INSTRUCTION: AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER VIEWPOINTS

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The use of small instructional groups in larger classroom settings has been suggested by a number of writers (Musgrave, 1975; Blackburn and Powell, 1976) as a method of individualizing instruction and improving learning in certain academic areas. Suggested uses for small group instructions have included goal setting, discussion, brainstorming, task analysis and attainment, and assessment. Some research has supported the idea that certain group products are often superior to individual member products (Bass, McGugor and Walters, 1977; Schumacher and Payne, in press). Other articles, mostly descriptive in nature, have suggested ways of implementing small group instruction (Clark and Ramsey, 1973; Glatthorn, 1966; Miles, 1959).

Although information regarding small group use is available, a number of teachers have resisted using them as an integral part of their instructional procedures. Situational variables such as type of objectives, age of students, type of student, and supervisor's expectations may account for failure of some teachers to use small groups; however, even in instances where such variables appear to favor small group instruction, many teachers do not use this type of instruction. The current study attempts to identify the reasons teachers give for using and not using small instructional groups. The authors believe that if such reasons can be identified, teacher training programs and teacher in-service programs could be structured to deal with many of the objections.

Methodology

This research study was conducted in two phases using two similar subject groups. The second phase was used as a cross validation of results in the first phase and to investigate the relationship of teacher opinions about using small groups and teachers' problems in classroom management.

Subjects

Sample sizes were 73 and 51 for Phases One and Two respectively. The original pool included all students enrolled in two introductory graduate education courses. Nineteen of the original pool of 92 Phase One subjects and nine of the original pool of 60 Phase Two subjects were deleted because they had never taught full time and/or omitted necessary information.

Instrumentation

Subjects in both phases responded to a five point Likert-type item indicating how often small groups were used as an instructional strategy in their classrooms. To investigate the relationship between attitudes toward use of small groups and reported classroom management difficulties, Phase Two subjects also responded to a five point Likert-type item indicating how difficult they found their classes to manage.

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Table #1

Pool of Items For Assessing Opinion of Use of Small Instructional Groups

Item #	Item
1.	Working in small groups is usually a waste of time.
2.	Working in small groups enables students to get to know each other better.
3.	The problems involved in working in small groups outweigh the benefits.
4.	Working in small groups teaches students constructive ways to resolve differences.
5.	Working in small groups limits individualization.
6.	Working in small groups fosters creativity.
7.	Small group work is an ineffective means to promote learning.
8.	Group assignments are more challenging than individual assignments.
9.	When working in a small group, at least one student carries less of the work load than others.
10.	Most students perform better in small groups than when working alone.
11.	Group assignments promote less effort than individual assignments.
12.	Group work fosters individual responsibility.
13.	Evaluation is usually unfair when students work in small groups.
14.	Small group work builds trust among students.
15.	Having students work in small groups is just a way for the instructor to reduce his work load.
16.	Group assignments are less threatening than individual assignments.

NOTE: Response format: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Agree; Strongly Agree

All subjects then responded to sixteen four point Likert-type items concerned with opinions about the use of small groups in instruction (See Table #1). One-half of the items expressed a positive opinion about the use of small groups and one-half expressed a negative opinion. All negative opinion items were reverse scored so that in all items a score of four indicated the most favorable response regarding small group usage. A score of one indicated the most unfavorable response.

Procedures

All subjects were instructed to respond to the items with reference to their current instructional situation.

Results and Discussion

In both phases, Pearson Product Moment Correlations were computed between scores on the five point item indicating frequency of small group usage and scores on each opinion item. These analyses revealed that five of the 16 items were correlated significantly ($p < .05$) with reported frequency of small group usage in both phases (See Table #2). Three other items were found to have correlations significant at the $p < .05$ level in one phase and at the $p < .10$ level in the other phase.

Table #2

Correlations Between Reported Frequency of Small Group Usage and Individual Opinion Items

Item	Phase One n = 74	Phase Two n = 51
	$p < .05$ in both phases	
3	.45***	.29**
5	.23**	.40***
7	.33***	.37***
9	.20**	.46***
13	.24**	.35***
	$p < .05$ in one phase and $p < .10$ in the other	
1	.56***	.22*
4	.21**	.23*
15	.28**	.24*
	Remaining Items	
2	.09	.23*
6	.15	.31**
8	-.22	.02
10	.01	.22*
11	.07	.02
12	.20**	.18
14	.03	.28**

Table #2 (Cont'd.)

Item	Phase One n = 74	Phase Two n = 51
16	-.02	-.04

* = One-Tailed Probability $<.10$
** = One-Tailed Probability $<.05$
*** = One-Tailed Probability $<.01$

In Phase Two, Pearson Product Moment Correlations were also computed between scores on the item indicating difficulty of managing the class and each opinion item. The results indicate that eight of these correlations were significant at the $p<.05$ level and three were significant at the $p<.10$ level (See Table #3).

Inspection of the results suggest that teachers who infrequently or never use small groups are likely to agree with the possible benefits of small group instruction to the same degree as teachers who frequently use such groups; however, the low usage teachers see the problems as outweighing the benefits. They view such groups as limiting individualization, promoting unfair work distribution among students, an ineffective learning strategy, and promoting unfair evaluation. To a lesser degree, they are more likely to believe that it is a waste of time, a mechanism used by teachers just to reduce their teaching load, and failing to be a consturctive way to resolve student differences. It is apparent that teachers who use groups less often are more likely to agree with the negative statements about small group use. Only one positively worded statement about small group usage was significantly correlated with frequency of usage.

The results in Table #3 suggest that teachers who find their classes difficult to manage are more likely to have negative opinions regarding the use of small groups. They are more likely to state that such groups waste time, limit individualization, have problems which outweigh the benefits, do not promote effective learning, require less effort, promote unfair evaluation, and are used by teachers just to reduce their work load. They are less likely to agree that such groups promote students getting to know one another, resolve student differences, and build trust among students.

It is obvious that there is a great deal of similarity between the responses of those subjects who use groups infrequently and those who find their classes difficult to manage. The implication is that teachers who have discipline problems do not view groups as a viable instructional alternative and probably view them as contributing to classroom management problems. This suggests that teachers who are insecure about managing a class are more likely to tightly organize their classrooms among more traditional lines.

The results of this study suggest that teacher education programs and teacher in-service programs should include components designed to assist

Table #3

Correlations Between Reported Difficulty of Managing Class and Individual Opinion Items

Item	N ≥ 51
1	-.32**
2	-.25**
3	-.40***
4	-.24**
5	-.28**
6	-.11
7	-.20*
8	.07
9	-.19*
10	-.05
11	-.29**
12	-.02
13	-.30**
14	-.23*
15	-.28**
16	-.03

* = $p < .10$
** = $p < .05$
*** = $p < .01$

Note: Negative Correlation indicates teachers with high difficulty managing class had negative opinions about the use of small groups.

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teachers in dealing with the potential drawbacks of the use of small instructional groups. Perhaps such programs should concentrate less on listing the advantages, but should emphasize practical ways of handling the potential problems associated with small group instruction. Specific components should deal with how to effectively and efficiently manage small groups, how small groups can successfully promote individualization and increase learning, and options for evaluating school work. If such drawbacks are overcome, it is more likely teachers will adopt small groups as a viable instructional strategy.

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